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ABSTRACT

In 1912 the Division of Municipal Recreation and Adult Education of the Milwaukee Public Schools was formed. Milwaukee then became known as the "City of the Lighted Schoolhouse". The Division was formed as a result of a law passed by the Wisconsin Legislature which permitted school boards to use school facilities for evening schools, vacation schools, reading rooms, library stations, debating clubs, gymnasiums, public playgrounds, public baths, and similar activities and accomodations. In 1912 two social centers and eight playgrounds met the needs of the extension department's program. Today there are 153 playgrounds and 142 centers, and the activities include day camps, nature centers, a farm, and camping sessions. The Divisions goals are people-centered and humanistic. Programs and activities are constantly being evaluated and changed to meet new needs. The work of the Division brought the Milwaukee System the National Sports Foundation 1974 Gold Medal Award for excellence in park and recreation services in American cities of over 250,000 population. Some of the programs to which the "Lighted Schoolhouse" is pointing in the future are the movements toward community education and leisure counseling. As outdoor education, special population, and other services have emerged in the past, so will these and others be the services of the future. (RC)

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GEORGE T. WILSON

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THE MILWAUKEE LIGHTED SCHOOLHOUSE PROGRAM AND THE FUTURE
IN A CONTEXT OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Soon after 1912, the year the Division of Municipal Recreation and Adult Education of the Milwaukee Public Schools was formed, Milwaukee became known as the "City of the Lighted Schoolhouse". After 64 years of serving people of all ages, the Division keeps the schoolhouse lights burning brighter than ever.

The Division--at first called the schools' extension department--was born as a result of a law passed by the Wisconsin Legislature in 1911. The law permitted school boards to use school facilities for "evening schools, vacation schools, reading rooms, library stations, debating clubs, gymnasiums, public playgrounds, public baths, and similar activities and accommodations".

The Milwaukee of 1912 was a vastly different city from what we know today. Streetcars noisily plied the streets, newfangled automobiles were competing with horses for space on the road (often to the horse's demise), movie theatres were in their infancy, and a free lunch could be had with a noon-time beer. In addition, indoor bathtubs were hard to come by; thus, the provision for "public baths".

As Milwaukee grew and changed so, too, did the Division's programs. Two social centers and eight playgrounds met the needs of the extension department's 1912 program at the time. The department's first head was H. O. Berg, one of five teachers assigned on a temporary basis to conduct the program. He resigned in 1920 and was replaced by Dorothy C. Enderis, another of the original

five. With her service spanning 28 years Miss Enderis directed the development of a municipal recreation program which earned international acclaim. People referred to her as the "lady of the lighted schoolhouse". She saw the value of a marriage between recreation and education and often stated that during work hours "one makes a living but during leisure one makes a life".

Total attendance in Division activities today at some 277 operations with 153 playgrounds and 142 centers is at the four million mark. This attendance includes an estimated three hundred thousand individual Milwaukeeans who are involved.

Today George T. Wilson, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Emeritus says "we're helping people achieve self realization". The chief reason, however, that people seek activities is to participate in something that's fun for them. People find fun and education in many and varied ways. Some enjoy climbing gym wall ladders simulating the mountain they will later challenge. Others like to play touch football, scuba dive, sing in a chorus for senior citizens, participate in a dramatic production or match wits in a game of chess. The activities of the Division are as varied as life itself. It operates day camps, nature centers, and a farm which is visited by ten thousand "one-day farmers" annually. The farm is owned by the State and is in an adjacent county. The Division's Hawthorn Glen nature center is a twenty-five acre area in town. Camping sessions, including family and survival camping for teens, are conducted in the Wisconsin northern Kettle Moraine State Forest fifty miles away and in the Nicolet National Forest area some three hundred miles distant.

Being part of the school system, the Division promulgates an educational philosophy of recreation. Recreation is not just fun and games but is an important and meaningful life experience. The goals are people-centered and humanistic. It seeks to assist people to improve their mobility, language competencies (reading, writing, numbers, oralization and listening); manual competencies; and social interaction. All should culminate in a positive self-image and true self-realization. The "people-centered program" is accomplished by the means of activities which are considered the means to an end.

Programs and activities are constantly being evaluated and changed to meet new needs. An example is a roving leader and street worker program which takes programs to children and teenagers who have limited access to playgrounds and parks. It also works with those having behavioral problems.

The Milwaukee System received the coveted National Sports Foundation 1974 Gold Medal Award for excellence in park and recreation services in American cities of over 250,000 population. The award cited the Division for its pioneering in leisure counseling; its utilization of computer technology in its business and program operations; involvement of patrons and community action groups; innovative programs including a wilderness encounter experience for high school youth; nationally recognized programs for the handicapped and other special populations; encouragement of volunteer service; and its cooperative efforts to broaden its program emphasis working with other governmental units, private and voluntary agencies and its work with 110 Milwaukee industries.

The challenge for the delivery of leisure services in the future as envisioned by the Milwaukee system is to "put it all together" in an era of unprecedented technical, social and psychological change and at the same time realizing that within this context human nature changes very little. Changes within the field in a single lifetime are akin to aerospace transportation changes in the same period from 90 to 25,000 miles per hour speeds.

The most powerful and significant changes, however, have always been in the realm of ideas. They in turn create demands for goods and services. This process is evident in leisure today. However, all of the leisure services agencies combined and in existence today will not be able to meet the demands of the decades ahead.

Some of the programs on the cutting edge to which the "Lighted Schoolhouse" is pointing in the future are the movements toward Community Education and Leisure Counseling. As Outdoor Education, Special Population and other services have emerged in the past, so will these and others be the service areas of the future.

> "One process by which true self-realization may be met is leisure counseling. Its major tool is the computer, and its substance consists of an identifying information sheet, an interest finder, a resource inventory, and an activity file. The special expertise required is the warm, human element of an understanding counselor. Leisure counseling opens opportunities for those in the mainstream of life through a maze of locally available outlets. It assists those in special populations who are on the fringe of the mainstream but may be limited by physical, mental, or cultural differences. It helps to ease the transition of the sheltered population in returning to the mainstream. Leisure counseling will surely become as commonplace in the future as parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers are today."*

* Wilson and Mirenda - COUNSELING AND VALUES, Vol. 20, #1, Oct. 1975 American Personnel and Guidance Assoc.

"Community Education is a concept that stresses an expanded role for public education and provides a dynamic approach to individual and community improvement. Community education encourages the development of a comprehensive and coordinated delivery system for providing education, recreational, social and cultural services for all people in a community. Although communities vary greatly with some being richer than others, all have tremendous human and physical resources that can be identified and mobilized to obtain workable solutions to problems. Inherent in the community education philosophy is the belief that each community education program should reflect the needs of its particular community. The philosophy advocates a process which produces essential modifications as times and problems change.

Community education provides an opportunity for people to work together to achieve community and self-improvement. As citizens become involved in the decision-making process, a climate of mutual respect, acceptance, and understanding of differences often develops which can result in improved community-school relationships. Through cooperation and communication, the schools become community schools which are operated in partnership with civic, business and lay leaders, as well as community, state, and federal agencies and organizations. These community schools offer lifelong learning and enrichment opportunities in education, recreation, social and related cultural services with the programs and activities coordinated and developed for citizens of all ages, ethnic backgrounds and socio-economic groups.

Community schools are open the entire year, 18 hours a day or longer, if necessary. They become a place where people of all ages gather to learn, to enjoy themselves and to be involved in community problem solving efforts. Although activities and programs are provided through school facilities, they are not limited to the school building itself because the school extends itself into the community. Agencies, factories, businesses, and the surrounding environment become part of the learning laboratory."**

The certified professional trained in an accredited program in delivery of leisure services will be proud of his or her

**Larry E. Becker - PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE - AN OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION, Pendell Publishing Co.

work and respected for the inner satisfaction that comes only in a profession that helps others to enrich their lives. The deliverer of such services will be a teacher of "people" not of games or subjects.